Essential Functions of Academic Advising: What Students Want and Get

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We designed this study to understand academic advising at an urban university from diverse student perspectives. Based on a review of the advising literature, we identified 12 functions of academic advising and surveyed 2,100 undergraduates to address the following questions: Which of these advising functions are most important to students? How satisfied are students with the advising they receive on these functions? Do student characteristics impact importance and satisfaction ratings? Results show that students rated all functions as highly important, but satisfaction with advising was not commensurate with the importance students attached to it. In general, student characteristics (gender, ethnicity, financial need, age/cohort, enrollment status, and class level) influenced perceived importance of, but not satisfaction with, advising functions.

KEY WORDS: advising approaches, developmental advising, prescriptive advising, satisfaction with advising, student characteristics, student perceptions of advising

Relative emphasis:* theory, research, practice

We conducted the present study to understand academic advising from the diverse student perspectives found at an urban university. We first note critical flaws in the conceptualization of academic advising, particularly the dichotomized differentiation of developmental versus prescriptive advising. We also discuss problems with empirical investigations of academic advising, specifically the lack of research on the implications of diverse student characteristics for advising preferences. We then present data from a survey that included 12 advising functions (both developmental and prescriptive) administered to a large sample of undergraduates at an urban university. Our primary research questions are as follows: Which advising functions are important to students? How satisfied are students with the advising they receive related to these functions? Do student characteristics impact importance and satisfaction ratings?

The conceptualization of advising as a form of teaching, with advisors focusing on student development, is the perspective most often presented as educationally appropriate. This perspective, based on the original conceptualizations of Crookston (1972) and O'Banion (1972) and elaborated by others (e.g., Ender, Winston, & Miller, 1982), is referred to as *developmental advising*. Developmental advising is a student-centered process that

- acknowledges the individuality of students,
- helps them integrate life, career, and educational goals,
- connects curricular and co-curricular aspects of their educational experience, and
- provides scaffolding that gives them opportunities to practice decision-making and problem-solving skills.

Developmental advising has typically been distinguished from prescriptive advising, which is based on the authority and primary responsibility of the advisor and involves the dispensing of information about courses and class schedules and the prescribing of remedies for problems (Winston & Sandor, 1984). With prescriptive advising the emphasis is on telling students what to do and what they need to know rather than providing them with choices and opportunities for decision making. Using the argument that students prefer it or that it has a greater impact on student success, many authors have purported that developmental advising is better than prescriptive advising. Indeed, these two forms of advising have been presented (Crookston, 1972; Habley, 1981) and measured (Winston & Sandor, 1984) as a dichotomy.

We believe that this dichotomized approach is problematic. Conceiving prescriptive and developmental advising as fundamentally incompatible does not allow students to tell the researcher that both kinds of advising are important to them. As Fielstein (1994) pointed out, dichotomous measurements preclude the students' independent judgment of the importance of both. In our view, effective advising likely includes many developmental aspects, and these need to be further differentiated both conceptually and empirically. However, some prescriptive functions, especially

* See note on page 4.

those around dispensing accurate information, cannot be discounted as unimportant. In fact, pockets of research support this assertion. For example, Fielstein (1989) and Smith (2002) provided data showing that students prioritized some prescriptive advising activities over developmental advising activities. Pilot study data from our own campus showed that graduating students rated the advisor's ability to give accurate information about degree requirements as more important than other, more developmental, advising functions.

Conceptualizations of advising as supporting student development are over 30 years old. Researchers on the college student of the 21st century need to take into consideration how higher education has changed in those 30 years. Higher education has been impacted by budget cuts, technological change, and demands for productivity and accountability. Faculty roles and responsibilities have changed; specifically, the amount of time faculty members spend advising students has decreased (Milem, Berger, & Dey, 2000). Equally important, students have changed in attitudes and behaviors (Astin, Oseguera, Sax, & Korn, 1997), and student bodies are becoming more diverse (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998). Compared to previous generations, students who attend North American universities are more ethnically diverse, likely to attend part-time and to work (often more than 20 hours per week and in jobs off campus). They are also older and more career focused than students of the past. Many of these characteristics have been identified as putting students at risk for not persisting toward degree completion (Horn & Premo, 1995).

Not only is the number of students with these risk factors increasing in higher education, but a disproportionate percentage enrolls in urban universities (Elliott, 1994). However, much of the research on academic advising has been conducted on residential campuses hosting traditional college students. Moreover, very few researchers have considered pre-enrollment or concurrent student characteristics, and research is beginning to show that these matter in student preferences for academic advising (Alexitch, 1997, 2002; Andrews, Andrews, Long, & Henton, 1987; Fielstein, Scoles, & Webb, 1992; Herndon, Kaiser, & Creamer, 1996; Mottarella, Fritzsche, & Cerabino, 2004). Because of the increasing heterogeneity of the student population, the conditional effects of college experiences on different groups of students need further exploration (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998).

We designed the study described here with these conceptual and empirical limitations in mind. We gathered ratings from a large group of diverse college students concerning the importance of, and their satisfaction with, functions that the literature suggests are related to effective advising. Central to this research is a contextual framework for academic advising, where student characteristics moderate the importance students attach to, and their satisfaction with, advising functions (Allen & Smith, 2002). Our view is that student characteristics add important variability that needs to be described and explained rather than statistically controlled.

Method

Participants

Participants were 2,193 undergraduates at a doctoral-research intensive (Higher Education Publications, 2005) urban university who completed a Web-based survey focused on academic advising administered in February 2003. The sample represented 18.3% of the target population of formally admitted undergraduate students. The sample mirrored the population on age (M = 26.5 years for both populations) and class level (lower vs. upper division). However, males (n = 841), Asian Americans (n = 151), and new students (i.e., those admitted for the fall 2002 or winter 2003 term [n = 600]), were underrepresented, while financially needy students (i.e., Pell-grant recipients [n = 842]) were slightly overrepresented. For the demographic breakdown of the sample and institution populations, see Table 1.

Survey Instrument

On the survey instrument, we asked students to rate the importance of, and their satisfaction with, 12 academic advising functions we identified through an examination of the advising literature since 1972. The 12 functions operationalized 5 constructs that have consistently been identified as essential to the advising role: integration, referral, information, individuation, and shared responsibility. Table 2 lists each of the 12 advising functions with the corresponding variable name.

Five of the functions concerned integration of the student's on- and off-campus experiences with both major and general education into a meaningful whole; see Borgard (1981), Burton and Wellington (1998), Crockett (1978, 1985), Crookston (1972), Ender et al. (1982), O'Banion (1972), Trombley (1984), and Walsh (1979). Often referred to as *holistic* in the advising literature, this kind of advising presumably fosters the connected learning that

Table 1 Sample characteristics relative to population characteristics (N = 11,979, n = 2,193)

		Population		Sample	
Characteristic		*N*	%	*n*	%
Gender	Male	5,498	45.9	841	38.3
	Female	6,481	54.1	1,352	61.7
Class standing	Lower division	3,510	29.3	647	29.5
	Upper division	8,469	70.7	1,546	70.5
Enrollment status	New	4,017	33.5	600	27.4
	Continuing	7,962	66.5	1,593	72.6
Ethnicity	White	7,918	66.1	1,578	72.0
	Asian American	1,234	10.3	151	6.9
	African American	383	3.2	54	2.5
	Hispanic	479	4.0	77	3.5
	Native American	156	1.3	30	1.4
	Multiple	168	1.4	35	1.6
	International	419	3.5	39	1.8
	Declined to respond	1,222	10.2	229	10.4
Pell grant recipient		4,073	34.0	842	38.4
Mean age		26.5 years		26.5 years	

Schneider (1997) cited as one of the goals of liberal education identified by the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Two of the listed functions involved referral to campus resources; see Crockett (1978, 1985), Fielstein (1989), Lagowski and Wick (1995), and O'Banion (1972). Two involved provision of information; see Andrews et al. (1987), Crockett (1978), Fielstein (1989), and Trombley (1984). Two addressed individuation (i.e., they involved consideration of the student's unique characteristics); see Berdahl (1995), Crockett (1978), Ender et al. (1982), Fielstein (1989), Ryan (1995), and Strommer (1995). The last function, shared responsibility, involved providing the student with opportunities to develop planning, problem-solving, and decision-making capabilities; see Crookston (1972), Frost (1991), and Strommer (1995). According to Frost (1991), this construct is the dominant theme in developmental advising.

Although students' personal concerns are sometimes discussed in the advising literature, we intentionally omitted functions that involve personal counseling, such as helping the student with personal, family, or peer problems, that may involve mental health issues. We believe this kind of help is crucial, but in general, assisting students with these kinds of problems is beyond the scope of an academic advisor, and students with these issues are best referred to professionals with specialized training. Also, empirical evidence suggests that students do not consider personal counseling a priority for academic advising (Fielstein, 1989; Trombley, 1984).

Students rated the importance of (How important is this advising function to you?) and their satisfaction with (How satisfied are you with the advising you receive on this function?) each advising function using 6-point Likert-type scales where scale point 1 = *not important* or *not satisfied* and scale point 6 = *very important* or *very satisfied*. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the importance ratings was .90; for the satisfaction ratings it was .94.

The survey was developed in consultation with professional and faculty academic advisors as well as students in a graduate-level student-services professional preparation program. Pilot versions of the survey were given to undergraduates in a lower-division general-education class and to graduating seniors as they picked up their caps and gowns.

Procedure

In February of 2003, undergraduates were sent an E-mail message from the president of the university encouraging them to complete a Web-based survey that would be part of spring quarter on-line registration. The message explained the purpose of the upcoming survey and emphasized its importance in improving academic advising at the university. When students logged onto the on-line registration system, they received a message from the president of the university inviting them to complete the survey. Those who did not respond were sent a follow-up E-mail from the president with directions for

Table 2 Academic advising functions and variable names (abbreviations)

Variable Name	Academic Advising Functions and Survey Items
	Integration Functions
Overall connect (oc)	Advising that helps students connect their academic, career, and life goals
Major connect (mc)	Advising that helps students choose among courses in the major that connect their academic, career, and life goals
Gen ed connect (gec)	Advising that assists students with choosing among the various general education options (e.g., choice of capstone, cluster, courses within cluster) that connect their academic, career, and life goals
Degree connect (dc)	Advising that assists students with deciding what kind of degree to pursue (bachelor of science, bachelor of arts, bachelor of music) to connect their academic, career, and life goals
Out-of-class connect (out)	Advising that assists students with choosing out-of-class activities (e.g., part-time employment, internships or practicum, participation in clubs or organizations) that connect their academic, career, and life goals
	Referral Functions
Referral academic (ra)	When students need it, referral to campus resources that address academic problems (e.g., math or science tutoring, writing, disability accommodation, testing anxiety)
Referral nonacademic (rn)	When students need it, referral to campus resources that address nonacademic problems (e.g., child care, financial, physical and mental health)
	Information Functions
How things work (how)	Assisting students with understanding how things work at this university (understanding time lines, policies, and procedures with regard to registration, financial aid, grading, graduation, petitions, and appeals, etc.)
Accurate information (ai)	Ability to give students accurate information about degree requirements
	Individuation Functions
Skills abilities interests (sai)	Taking into account students' skills, abilities, and interests in helping them choose courses
Know as individual (ki)	Knowing the student as an individual
	Shared Responsibility Function
Shared responsibility (sr)	Encouraging students to assume responsibility for their education by helping them develop planning, problem-solving, and decision-making skills

accessing the survey at their convenience. Upon preliminary examination of the representativeness of the sample, a second follow-up E-mail was sent to those who had not yet completed the survey. This E-mail noted that males, ethnic minorities, and freshmen were underrepresented in the sample, and members of those groups were urged to respond.

Students who indicated that they were not currently getting academic advice from faculty or staff at the university (n = 666 or 30.4% of the sample) were not asked to rate their satisfaction with the advising functions.

Student responses to the survey were merged with data from the student information system so information about student characteristics could be included in the study. Students who declined to provide ethnicity information were omitted from analyses in which ethnicity was considered. Because international students' concept of ethnicity may differ from that of domestic students, international students (n = 39) were also omitted from ethnicity analyses.

Results

The means and standard deviations of the importance and satisfaction ratings for the 12 advising functions for the entire sample are presented in Table 3. The functions are listed in order of rank scores for importance; for the convenience of the reader, Table 3 also presents the rank score for satisfaction on each function.

All functions were rated on the important end of the scale (i.e., above scale point 4 on the 6-point

Table 3 Means, standard deviations, and ranks of importance and satisfaction ratings for total sample

	Importance Ratings				Satisfaction Ratings			
Advising Function	*N*	Mean	*SD*	Rank	*N*	Mean	*SD*	Rank
Accurate information	1,785	5.64	.80	1	1,235	3.87	1.58	1
Major connect	1,818	5.00	1.23	2	1,254	3.69	1.53	5.5
How things work	1,789	4.99	1.28	3	1,231	3.52	1.59	9
Overall connect	1,834	4.95	1.27	4	1,266	3.73	1.55	3
Skills abilities interests	1,779	4.78	1.37	5	1,210	3.63	1.51	8
Know as individual	1,789	4.70	1.44	6	1,224	3.51	1.61	10
Shared responsibility	1,770	4.69	1.46	7	1,200	3.78	1.49	2
Referral academic	1,775	4.57	1.53	8	1,195	3.71	1.48	4
Degree connect	1,792	4.47	1.60	9	1,231	3.67	1.56	7
Gen ed connect	1,787	4.43	1.51	10	1,226	3.42	1.58	11
Referral nonacademic	1,772	4.38	1.67	11	1,175	3.69	1.50	5.5
Out-of-class connect	1,784	4.21	1.68	12	1,203	3.21	1.58	12

Note. For mean scores, 1 = *not important* or *not satisfied* and 6 = *very important* or *very satisfied*.

scale). The top-rated functions showed the least variability. Ratings of satisfaction were in the middle of the scale (i.e., between scale point 3 and 4 on the 6-point scale). The function with the highest mean importance rating, accurate information, was also the function with which students were most satisfied. Students were least satisfied with the least important function, out-of-class connect. Other functions showed discrepancies between rank order of importance and satisfaction ratings. However, the means for the satisfaction ratings are much closer together (range of .66) than the means for the importance ratings (range of 1.43). Thus, differences in the rankings across the importance and satisfaction dimensions may be capitalizing on rather small differences in mean satisfaction ratings.

Importance Ratings as a Function of Student Characteristics

Using multiple regression analyses, we considered student characteristics simultaneously to examine their unique association with importance ratings. The criterion variable for each analysis was the importance ratings for the particular advising function, and the predictor variables were gender, age/cohort, class level (lower vs. upper division), enrollment status (new vs. continuing), financial need, and ethnicity.

The results of the simultaneous regression analyses are presented in Table 4. The table includes only those predictors with an alpha level of less than .05. In general, when student characteristics were taken into consideration simultaneously, gender, age/cohort, financial need, and ethnicity were the predominant characteristics that were uniquely associated with importance ratings. Gender significantly predicted importance ratings of 11 of the 12 advising functions. Although not displayed here, our results showed that the greatest mean gender difference occurred with the function involving referral to campus resources for nonacademic problems (for males, $M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.74$; for females, $M = 4.60$, $SD = 1.59$). Ethnicity significantly predicted importance ratings of 9 of the 12 functions. In general, Asian American students, African American students, and students reporting multiple ethnicities most often rated the functions differently than did White students. Financial need significantly predicted importance ratings of 7 of the 12 functions. Age/cohort significantly predicted 6 of the 12 importance ratings, including 4 of the 5 integration functions and both information functions. Enrollment status and class level significantly predicted importance ratings of 3 and 2, respectively, of the 12 functions.

Satisfaction Ratings as a Function of Student Characteristics

We next conducted simultaneous regression analyses, similar to those run on the importance ratings, using the satisfaction ratings for the particular advising function as the criterion variables for each analysis. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 5. The table includes only those predictors with an alpha level of .10 or less. In general, when student characteristics were taken into consideration simultaneously, age/cohort, enrollment status, and to a limited extent, ethnicity were uniquely associated with satisfaction ratings. Age/cohort significantly predicted the satisfaction ratings of all but the two referral functions. Cohorts born earlier (i.e., older students) rated their satis-

Table 4 Summary of simultaneous regression analyses predicting importance ratings of advising functions (significant effects only)

	oc	mc	gec	dc	out	ra	rn	how	ai	sai	ki	sr
Advising Function	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig
Gender	–.12***	–.11***	–.06*	–.09***	–.06*	–.10***	–.17***	–.12***	–.07**	–.09***	–.11***	
Financial need	.06*			.05*	.09***	.08***	.18***	.05*			.05*	
Birth year	–.12***	–.07*	–.14***	–.08**				–.07*	–.09***			
Enrollment status	.05*				.05*						.06*	
Class level			.06*			.06*						
Asian American	.06*		.08**	.08***	.08***	.10***				.07**		.07**
African American			.05*	.06*		.07**	.05*					
Hispanic American							.06*					
Multiple ethnicity			.06*	.06*						.05*	.05*	
R^2	.04***	.03***	.03***	.03***	.03***	.04***	.07***	.03***	.02**	.02***	.03***	.02**
F	6.50	4.27	5.41	5.33	4.24	6.64	11.07	4.57	2.85	3.67	3.96	2.51

Note. Gender was coded as 1 = male, 0 = female; age/cohort was coded as birth year; class level was coded as 1 = lower division student, 0 = upper division student; enrollment status was coded as 1 = new student, 0 = continuing student; financial need was coded as 1 = Pell grant recipient, 0 = not Pell grant recipient; and ethnicity was coded as 1 = member of specific ethnic group, 0 = White.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 5 Summary of simultaneous regression analyses predicting satisfaction ratings of advising functions (significant effects only)

	oc	mc	gec	dc	out	ra	rn	how	ai	sai	ki	sr
Advising Function	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig
Gender												
Need												
Birth year	–.15***	–.11***	–.09**	–.14***	–.11***			–.11***	–.09**	–.08**	–.13***	–.09**
Enrollment status	.07*	.08*	.07*		.08*			.08*	.07*	.09**		.09**
Class level												
Asian American												
African American			.07*									
Multiple ethnicity												
Native American				–.06*								
R^2	.03***	.02**	.02*	.03***	.02**	.01	.01	.02**	.02*	.02*	.02**	.02*
F	3.48	2.64	2.17	2.90	2.50	1.03	1.20	2.40	1.85	1.97	2.44	1.93

Note. Gender was coded as 1 = male, 0 = female; age/cohort was coded as birth year; class level was coded as 1 = lower division student, 0 = upper division student; enrollment status was coded as 1 = new student, 0 = continuing student; financial need was coded as 1 = Pell grant recipient, 0 = not Pell grant recipient; and ethnicity was coded as 1 = member of specific ethnic group, 0 = White.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

faction higher than did younger students. Enrollment status significantly predicted 8 of the 12 satisfaction ratings, with new students more satisfied than continuing students. Ethnicity was associated with satisfaction ratings of two advising functions: African American students were more satisfied than White students with gen ed connect, while Native American students were less satisfied than White students with degree connect.

Discussion

The results of this study confirm that the advis-

ing functions we identified are important to students: information; integration of various parts of the curriculum with academic, career, and life goals; individuation; shared responsibility; and referral. Students care about these advising functions; even the function rated lowest by the entire sample (advising that assists students with choosing out-of-class activities) was rated on the important end of the scale (i.e., above scale point 4 on the 6-point scale). Information is paramount to students; two of the three top-rated functions in the overall sample, ability to give accurate information about degree requirements and assisting students with understanding university policies and procedures, involve an information exchange from advisor to advisee. In fact, the accurate information function was influenced by fewer student characteristics than any other, suggesting that this function is central to advising for all students. Thus, while students value the developmental aspects of advising, they value accurate information above all else. This suggests that effective academic advising has both developmental and prescriptive elements.

Although all functions were rated on the important end of the scale, students nonetheless discriminated among them. The academic aspects of the educational experience are preeminent; advising functions rated least important by the overall sample, assistance with choosing out-of-class activities and referral to resources for nonacademic problems, involve cocurricular services and activities. Holistic advising functions having to do with integrating different parts of the student's experience with academic, career, and life goals varied in their importance to students. Advising that helps students choose courses in the major and that helps them connect their goals overall, were the second and fourth most important functions, respectively, for the total sample. However, other integration functions related to the kind of degree to pursue (e.g., bachelor of arts or bachelor of science), choice of general education options, or choice of out-of-class activities were among the lowest ranked functions.

It is interesting to note that the advising functions that some theorists would argue define the essence of developmental advising (i.e., knowing students as individuals; taking into account their skills, interests, and abilities; and encouraging them to assume responsibility for their education) were in the middle of the rankings. Thus, although students rated these functions on the important end of the scale, they considered them secondary to the information and two of the integration functions.

Importance ratings were associated with student characteristics. Gender effects were prominent; women rated all but one advising function as more important than did men. These advising functions all involve help seeking, and other research has found that women are more likely than men to seek professional help for a variety of problems in living (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). Men's reluctance to seek help also offers an explanation for the finding in the present study that the greatest mean gender difference occurred with the function involving referral to campus resources for nonacademic problems.

Ethnicity was also associated with student ratings of advising importance. African American, Asian American, and sometimes multi-ethnic students rated many of the functions as more important than did White students. At the same time, neither Native American nor Hispanic students (except on one function) rated the importance of advising functions differently than did White students. Enormous differences are evident within these socially constructed ethnic categories, and as a result, generalizations about students within any group should be made with caution. Advisors need to understand better how these differences among ethnic groups in their ratings of advising function importance relate to issues of privilege, social capital, recency of immigration, and other characteristics not measured here.

Generally, these advising functions were more important to financially needy students (Pell grant recipients) than to their more affluent counterparts. Students with limited financial resources are in a disadvantaged position; other research has shown that financially needy students take longer to get their degrees, are less likely to obtain a degree, and engage in activities that detract from persistence (working off campus, spending less time studying) (Terenzini, Cabrera, & Bernal, 2001; Walpole, 2003). All of our analyses involved comparison between students who had received Pell grants and other students. Our data suggest that students with Pell grants recognize the role that advising plays in enhancing their chance for success.

Age/cohort was uniquely associated with importance ratings of some advising functions. Both of the information functions, and four of the five functions involving integration of academic, career, and life goals, were more important to older than to younger students. Older students may be more likely to have formulated their goals; thus, they see the integration of those goals and academic experiences as important. Furthermore, older students may be more likely to know what they do not

know; thus, information is more important to them than it is to their younger peers.

Ratings of the importance of some advising functions were also associated with class level. Referral for academic problems was more important to lower division students; students who struggle with unresolved academic problems are less likely to persist, and therefore would not be present in the upper division sample. In addition, class level was associated with student ratings of the importance of advising that assists student in choosing among the various general education options. The curriculum of lower division students is more dominated by these requirements than is the curriculum for upper division students; thus the importance rating by lower division students is consistent with their situations.

Enrollment status was also uniquely associated with importance ratings. New students, who in our analyses included both new freshmen and new transfer students, rated two of the integration functions (overall connect; out-of-class connect) as more important than did continuing students. Integrative advising functions are important to new students, who are just learning about the institution and how the opportunities it offers can connect their academic, career, and life goals. In addition, new students rated one of the individuation functions (know as individual) as more important than did continuing students. For new students, the matching of their unique educational needs with the offerings of the institution is an important aspect of successful inclusion into the new setting.

In summary, the differences in importance ratings observed in relation to student characteristics suggest that a one-size-fits-all conceptualization of academic advising is not appropriate. The importance students attach to different advising functions needs to be conceived along characteristics of gender, ethnicity, financial need, age/cohort, class level, and enrollment status.

For the sample as a whole, student ratings of satisfaction with the advising they receive on each function were in the midrange of the scale (i.e., between scale point 3 and 4 on the 6-point scale). It is unfortunate that student satisfaction with advising is not commensurate with the importance students attach to it. However, the advising function most important to students (the ability to give accurate information about degree requirements) was also the function with which they were most satisfied, albeit at an unimpressive level. Likewise, advising that assists students with choosing out-of-class activities that connect their academic, career, and life goals ranked last in both importance and satisfaction. Although these data may seem reassuring, comparisons between rank order for importance and satisfaction ratings should be interpreted with caution because the two sets of ratings differed in variability.

Unlike the importance ratings, satisfaction ratings were not associated with gender, financial need, or class level. Furthermore, compared to its relationship with importance ratings, ethnicity was associated with fewer satisfaction ratings, and those ethnicity associations found did not show a consistent pattern. Because satisfaction ratings were not obtained from students who reported they were not currently receiving advice from faculty or staff at the university, the sample size of ethnic subgroups for the regression analyses involving these ratings was reduced. Replication of the results found here would be helpful in furthering understanding of the role ethnicity might play in student satisfaction with advising.

However, age/cohort and enrollment status were consistently associated with satisfaction ratings. Students in older cohorts may be less intimidated by the faculty and more assertive in seeking and getting the advice they need. The finding that new students were more satisfied than continuing students may reflect the fact that most new students have recently participated in the university's orientation program, which has an intentional academic-advising component. Another possibility is that new students have limited expectations and hence are more satisfied with whatever advising they receive. Still a third explanation is that the longer students interact with the educational environment and the closer they get to achieving their educational goals, the higher the stakes become and the less tolerant they are of inadequate advising. Longitudinal data would clarify the influence of enrollment status on student advising satisfaction.

While this study makes a contribution to better understanding academic advising from the perspective of diverse students, it has several limitations. All respondents were self-selected students from one institution. Further study is needed to determine if students at other types of institutions attach similar levels of importance to and satisfaction with these advising functions.

Quantitative data, such as the results presented here, report how students responded, but they do not provide information about the reasons for their responses. Thus, our data do not address the advising processes that contribute to importance and satisfaction ratings, and ultimately to student

development. Further research is needed to understand better why some advising functions are more important to certain groups of students, particularly students from some ethnic minority groups, than others.

We examined experiences with academic advising without considering how other experiences, particularly the student's level of academic and social involvement on campus, might have directly or indirectly influenced students' perception of importance of and satisfaction with advising functions.

Implications for Practice

All of the functions we identified— information, integration, individuation, shared responsibility, and referral—are important to students, and advisors should provide them. Advisors need to be aware of the distinction between prescribing a curriculum for students and giving them accurate information on which to base educational decisions. Moreover, students should be equipped with navigational skills by advisors who help them understand the time lines, policies, and procedures at their institutions. Regardless of size and mission, colleges and universities are complex, and students need to develop what Attinasi (1989) refers to as "cognitive maps" (p. 268) of the institution and their place within it. Giving students accurate information about degree requirements and helping them understand policies and procedures at their institution are fundamental to the development of these cognitive maps and thus to the advising role.

Advisors should assist students in making this foundational knowledge meaningful by helping them integrate academic, career, and life goals with respect to choosing courses in the major, general educational options, the kind of degree to pursue, and out-of-class activities. Advisors should provide an atmosphere of shared responsibility that considers students' individuality, and they should address barriers to accomplishing goals through referral to campus resources.

Institutions should provide professional development opportunities and incentives to assist advisors, particularly faculty members, in incorporating the various advising functions into their practice. Faculty members may not even know that quality academic advising is more than dispensing information; it should involve referral and be holistic, individualized, and a shared responsibility.

In terms of student outcomes, what probably matters is that students get good advising on functions they consider most important. If this assumption is correct, then the results also suggest that investment in improving advising may be more crucial for students who are underrepresented in higher education: older students, students of color, and those who are financially needy. Institutions must provide advising programs that specifically target and support nontraditional students, particularly those who are members of ethnic minority groups and those who receive Pell grants.

While advisors need to be sensitive to how student characteristics influence the importance students attach to various advising functions, they still need to tailor their advising strategies to the individuality of the particular student they are advising at the moment. However, individuation and other developmental aspects of advising should not overshadow the important informational, task-oriented aspects. Accurate information about degree requirements and university policies and procedures is paramount to students. By providing these essential information components that students want, advisors may lay the foundation for a relationship that fosters the developmental advising functions of integration, individuation, and shared responsibility that students need.

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